

SC Department of Employment and Workforce
NEWS RELEASE

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SC Department of Employment and Workforce Announces Systematic Highlights

SCDEW employees worked during holidays to ensure state's jobless received benefits as agency's solvency plan continues to move in positive direction and positive partnerships are forged

Columbia, SC...The SC Department of Employment and Workforce (SCDEW) today announced systematic highlights for the end of 2010 and going forward. The SCDEW has implemented a number of successful reforms that have improved efficiency in the operation of the unemployment insurance program, developed and implemented a plan to restore the state's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund to solvency and increased collaboration and efforts to form partnerships with other agencies.

During the recent two-week holiday period, SCDEW employees worked diligently to ensure the state's jobless would receive their benefits on time pending the passage of legislation by Congress which included extending the Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) program through January 2012.

Although DEW employees had to wait to hear when Congress would pass the legislation, they continued to take claims and make plans for the eventual passage of this bill. "The planning and diligence of our employees allowed us to get checks out to claimants over the holidays without the long, drawn-out holding period of two to three weeks," said SC Department of Employment and Workforce Executive Director John L. Finan.

Over the holidays, SCDEW employees worked feverishly to pay nearly a quarter million claimants more than \$18.8 million dollars. "Thanks to the dedication of our employees, we released approximately 200,000 direct deposit and debit card transactions to needy claimants," said Finan. "Our employees have done an incredible job. They are talented, innovative, and dedicated to serving the citizens of South Carolina."

Other highlights include:

Efforts to return the state's Trust Fund to solvency:

The SCDEW is continuously making progress toward its 2015 goal of returning the state's Trust Fund to solvency.

The General Assembly last year passed laws that included provisions designed to improve the integrity of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. The significant economic recession--which began in late 2007--resulted in the agency borrowing over \$890 million from the federal government to maintain unemployment benefit payments.

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"To repay those outstanding loans and restore the trust fund to a healthy balance, The SCDEW has taken a multi-pronged approach including increased compliance and oversight to ensure that ineligible claimants do not receive benefits; a reform of the unemployment tax system to make it more fair and responsive; and an increased emphasis on cost saving measures and improved customer contact," said Finan. "And, despite the tough economic environment, we are making solid financial progress in restoring solvency to the state's Trust Fund."

The first voluntary repayment of the loan is scheduled for May 2011 of approximately \$140 million, with full payoff scheduled for 2015.

Increased Partnership and Collaboration

The SCDEW is collaborating with the South Carolina Department of Revenue and the South Carolina Business One Stop in an effort to simplify unemployment tax collections from businesses—moving away from collecting checks to encouraging direct deposit or other forms of electronic payment for all tax collections.

"We continue transforming the agency from a medium of collecting multiple correspondences to a simpler, faster way of communicating with employers," said Finan. "Working together enables us to continue leveraging the development of communications between businesses and the SCDEW for wages, separation notices, and other required reports, which assists us in our ability to be more efficient and easily accessible."

The Virtual One-Stop (VOS) System

Employers and job candidates now have the opportunity to take advantage of a powerful online search engine that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week--and can be accessed from anywhere at anytime. The VOS System is web-based and all-inclusive such that--depending upon the information you are seeking--it will deliver results for those either looking to recruit candidates, obtain job market trends or seek employment. And because the VOS system extracts information from ALL search engines, it makes job selection and recruitment easier, faster and more varied for both the job seeker and the employer. Please visit www.SConestop.org to access the VOS system.

For additional information about the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce or any of the programs please visit dew.sc.gov.